

# ATLANTIS EXPLORING ORIGINS OF A CIVILIZATION

## Abstract

This paper explores some of the Atlantean connections in Egyptian, Mayan, Aztec, and Toltec traditions, suggesting a historical basis for the fabled lost civilization. From the Emerald Tablets of Thoth to the Mayan codices, recurring themes of catastrophic destruction, migration, and survival suggest that the legacy of Atlantis influenced civilizations on both sides of the Atlantic.

References to Atlantis appear in literature long before the time of Plato or even Herodotus. To begin this discussion, we will examine an example dating back 2,500 years before Plato. It is widely acknowledged that the Sanskrit texts cited here were originally composed, memorized, and orally transmitted across generations long before they were written down (Colebrooke, 1805). Even in their written Sanskrit form, these texts are of great antiquity.

Another important consideration is that we are dealing with inflected languages, both classical and archaic, where the spelling of a word changes based on its grammatical role in a sentence (e.g., as a subject, object, or indirect object). These variations naturally evolve over time, so fixed or unchanging word forms should not be expected. For instance, in Attic Greek, the nominative plural of "Nazarene" is Nazaraioi ("Nazareans"), while the nominative plural of "Atlantean" is Atlantioi ("Atlanteans"). The root of the word "Atlantis" is likely something akin to Atlan, a term prominently found in Mesoamerican languages.

The Surya Siddhanta, an esteemed Sanskrit text translated by Yale professor William D. Whitney in 1869, identifies Atlantis by different names corresponding to three distinct stages of its history:

1. Saka Dwipa (Early Atlantis)
2. Ruta and Daitya (Middle Atlantis, during its geographic peak, divided into two regions—Ruta in the North Atlantic and Daitya to its south)
3. Sancha Dwipa (a remnant of Ruta, which corresponds to Plato's Atlantis).

Notably, these stages align with the last three major glaciations identified by modern geology.

The Vishnu Purana, one of the oldest Hindu Puranas (circa 2000 BCE), also references Atala, described as the "White Island." It is listed as one of the seven Dwipas (islands or continents) that belong to Patala (meaning the opposite side of the Earth or the antipodes) in Book II, Chapters i-iii. Geographically, the Vishnu Purana places Atala in the "seventh climate zone," which Col. Wilford (1808) locates at approximately 24° to 28° north latitude. This corresponds to regions near the Canary Islands in the eastern North Atlantic and the Bahama Islands in the west. While some skeptics have speculated that Atala might refer to Italy, this is unlikely for two reasons: first, Italy is not an island, and second, its latitude (38° to 45° north) does not match Atala's described location.

Col. Wilford (1808) referred to Atala as "Atlantis, the White Island," with a Sanskrit commentary adding that it "became black with sin" (Blavatsky, 1888). According to the Vishnu

Purana, Atala was destroyed by a violent storm, and other Puranas recount that six additional islands (Dwipas) were wiped out during the same cataclysm. Similarly, the Mahabharata dedicates several verses (slokas) to Atala, describing it as a "White Island of great splendor" located in the North Atlantic (Santi Parva, Section CCCXXXVII). The text portrays Atala as inhabited by white men who neither sleep nor eat and who are devoted to Narayana (possibly Neptune-Poseidon) and worship a single deity.

The name Atala is notable for its parallels across cultures on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, the word Attala is used by the Berbers in Tunisia, while the term Atalaya is found among the Guanches of the Canary Islands (Berlitz, 1972). In North America, a prehistoric village in Wisconsin is called Aztalan, an archaeological site documented by Hole and Heizer (1973).

The Bhavishya Purana recounts the story of Samba, who, after constructing a temple dedicated to Surya (the sun), embarks on a journey to Saka-Dwipa, described as being "beyond the salt water." Samba seeks the Magus, sun-worshippers, and is guided on his journey by Surya himself. Following the sun westward, he eventually reaches Saka-Dwipa after crossing the salt waters. As mentioned earlier, Saka-Dwipa is the term used in the Surya Siddhanta to describe Early Atlantis. Interestingly, Sanchuniathon also refers to the Magus as ancestors of Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, writing, and mathematics, who is often linked to Atlantis.

The Vayu Purana contains the tale of King Sankhasura, a ruler of a region in Sankha Dwipa, symbolically depicted as living in a palace shaped like a giant "ocean shell." His subjects, the Daityas, are similarly described as dwelling in ocean shells. Wilford (1808), the translator, notes that the Daityas often clashed with the Devatas (gods), but the Daityas gained the upper hand. Sankhasura, residing in the ocean, would lead night raids against his enemies.

"In their desperation, the few surviving nations who endured the battles between the Devatas and Daityas prayed to Bhagavan: 'Let him who can deliver us become our king.'" In response, a violent storm arose. The "dark waters of the ocean were strangely agitated," and from the waves emerged a man leading a great army. Proclaiming abhayan ("no fear"), he defeated the cruel Daityas, scattering them and restoring peace and prosperity to Sankha Dwipa (Vayu Purana). The people of Sancha Dwipa, Atala, or Atlantis—whichever name one prefers—are identified as Daityas and Asuras.

The Daityas belong to the Asuras, a class of beings whose name is derived from the Sanskrit sura (god) with the privative prefix a- to mean "not a god." The term Asura implies a being that is "less-than-a-god," akin to the classical concept of a daemon—though this differs

greatly from the term's modern interpretation. Hindu literature depicts the Asuras as a rebellious race of "not-gods," opposed to the deities. In Sanskrit texts, the Asuras and Daityas are frequently associated with Atlantis: Asura refers to their nature or class, while Daitya denotes their nationality.

By definition, a Daityan is an inhabitant of Daitya, an island (dwipa) located in the Western Ocean (the Atlantic). The term daitya itself seems to mean "just" or "right." However, Hindu mythology portrays the Daityas as giants or water demons and associates them with extreme wickedness. Thus, they are often identified with the Titans of Greek mythology. According to the Mahabharata, the Daityas are linked to the "war of the gods and Asuras" and the destruction of Tripura (Triple City) in the Western Ocean. This city was considered impenetrable until the gods sought counsel from Brahma, the Creator. They were advised that a single missile, containing "the Power of the Universe," would be required to destroy all three parts of the city simultaneously. Mounted on an aerial vehicle (vimana), the weapon was flown to Triple City by Cakra, who unleashed it, burning the Asuras and submerging them in the Western Ocean. Later verses mention Africa as the eastern shore of this ocean, confirming that Daitya and Triple City were located in the Atlantic.

A shorter version of this account appears in the Drona Parva (Section XI): "Unleashing his power, Mahadeva hurled the paradisiacal Daitya city into the sea... vanquishing its inhabitants, including the Avantis, Southerners, and Mountaineers. In ancient times, he even penetrated the sea itself to battle Varuna [Poseidon] in the ocean depths, surrounded by aquatic creatures."

A more detailed narrative is found in the Karna Parva (Section XXXIII), which shares striking similarities with Plato's accounts in *Timaeus* and *Critias*.

In this version, Duryodhana recounts a tale originally narrated by the sage Markandeya. He describes a great battle between the gods and Asuras, which began with the rise of Taraka. Following the defeat of the Daityas, Taraka's three sons—Tarakaksha, Kamalaksha, and Vidyunmalin—undertook severe penances and received a boon from Brahma. They were granted immunity from death, with the condition that they could only be killed when their three cities were united as one. The Asura architect Maya was commissioned to construct these cities, which were crafted to rotate in a circular motion. Each city measured 100 yojanas in length and breadth and was made of gold, silver, or iron.

These cities were teeming with palaces, mansions, and spacious streets, with each city governed by one of Taraka's sons. Over time, the Daityas became aggressive and destructive, practicing cannibalism and annihilating towns across the universe. Consumed by pride and

malice, they defied the gods and declared themselves invincible. Eventually, their cities were united, fulfilling the condition of their destruction.

The narrative ends with the gods triumphing over the Daityas using a celestial weapon that destroyed the Triple City in one strike. This tale, rich with mythological imagery, bears a remarkable resemblance to Plato's description of Atlantis as a powerful and advanced civilization ultimately brought down by divine forces.

The parallels between Plato's account of Atlantis and the narratives from ancient texts, such as the Mahabharata and Egyptian records, are remarkable. Both recount stories of an advanced civilization that was circular in design, warlike in nature, and ultimately destroyed by a catastrophic event. The similarities between these accounts suggest a shared origin or cultural memory rather than purely coincidental, independent stories.

For instance, in Plato's story, Atlantis is described as a civilization located in the Atlantic Ocean that was destroyed after a great war. Similarly, the Mahabharata recounts the war of the gods and Asuras, a legendary battle that ends with the destruction of a civilization using a fiery, catastrophic weapon—possibly resembling nuclear energy. Both narratives emphasize the moral decline of the inhabitants as a precursor to their destruction, and both situate these events in the distant past, "in the days of yore."

The Mahabharata, an epic rich with ancient legends, begins with tales of creation and continues with accounts of great floods, wars, and mythological sagas. The war of the gods and Asuras is one of the central narratives and is repeated in various forms throughout the text. This war is often compared to the battles of the Mahabharatan war, emphasizing its significance to ancient Indian culture. Greek and Sanskrit traditions share several similarities regarding the location of these events (in the Atlantic Ocean) and the use of a destructive weapon to achieve victory. However, Plato attributes the defeat of Atlantis to the Athenians, while the Mahabharata credits divine intervention.

Ancient commentaries, such as the Book of Dzryan, suggest that the destruction of Atlantis could have been caused by a shift in the Earth's axis. This idea aligns with what the Egyptian priests at Heliopolis told Herodotus—that the sun had risen in reverse directions several times during the last 12,000 years, though Egypt remained unaffected. Such cataclysmic changes are also reflected in Egyptian star maps, such as those found in the tomb of Senmut, architect to Queen Hatshepsut. These maps depict the stars in reversed positions, further supporting the notion of axial shifts.

The Egyptian priesthood's records offer corroboration of Plato's timelines. They told Solon that the flood of Deucalion, known to the Greeks, was the fourth such cataclysm in a span of 11,000 years. Herodotus recorded similar accounts of axial changes and upheavals, and the Dendera Zodiac situates these events during the vernal equinox in Leo and Aquarius, pointing to a timeframe that closely matches Plato's date for Atlantis's demise.

Further evidence of an ancient advanced civilization comes from Egyptian king lists. The Turin Papyrus and other records describe the "reign of the gods" and place the first dynasties of demigods as far back as 9,850 BCE—very close to Plato's date for the sinking of Atlantis. The Dendera Zodiac, now in the Louvre, begins its celestial calculations in the sign of Leo, suggesting a date around 9,825 BCE, another match for Plato's narrative.

Not only do Egyptian texts align chronologically with the Atlantean saga, but they also reference a civilization that matches its characteristics. The Harris Papyrus and Hermitage Papyrus describe a catastrophic event that tilted the Earth, while the Book of the Dead recounts the story of Thoth, a figure born in a far western land with volcanic activity and a central mountain—a description eerily reminiscent of Atlantis. Known as the "Island of Flame," this land experienced a great catastrophe that darkened the sun and disrupted the gods. Thoth, however, led survivors eastward, bringing knowledge and civilization to Egypt.

Thoth is further credited as the god of writing and the inventor of letters. According to Manetho, he inscribed sacred knowledge on stelae before the great catastrophe and later translated it into common language. The texts also call Thoth the "controller of the Flood" and "Lord of the West," suggesting his association with a western origin and survival of a deluge.

Even Egyptian king lists, such as the Old Chronicle, reference a sequence of 30 dynasties spanning 36,525 years, beginning with Cronos during the reign of the gods. This period coincides with the Sumerian king lists, which total 36,154 solar years, marking the beginning of Cro-Magnon Man—a potential link between Atlantis and the rise of human civilization.

The surviving Egyptian records, scattered across texts like the Book of the Dead, star maps, and papyri, offer compelling evidence that Atlantis—or a civilization very much like it—existed and left its mark on human history. These records suggest that the story of Atlantis, as told by Plato, may not be a mere fable but a fragmented memory of an ancient, advanced society whose demise was preserved in the myths and writings of multiple cultures.

The evidence suggests that Thoth, a central figure in Egyptian mythology, may have originated in Atlantis. As a contemporary of King Cronos, Thoth is believed to have emigrated

to Egypt, bringing with him the advanced knowledge and civilization of Atlantis. He is credited with authoring the Emerald Tablets, contributing to several chapters of the Book of the Dead (such as Chapters XXXb, CLXIV, XXVIIb, and CXLVIII), and laying the foundations of ancient Egyptian science. Portions of the Book of the Dead, which belong to the Hermetic tradition named after Thoth (known to the Greeks as Hermes), are estimated to be over 6,000 years old (Budge, 1933).

A fragment of Sanchuniathon adds further weight to the Atlantis narrative. It recounts how Cronos, under the advice of Hermes (Thoth), built a wall around his habitation. Suspicious of his brother Atlas (referred to as Atlanta in the original), Cronos imprisoned him in a deep cavern and buried him there. This tale bears striking similarities to the Atlantean themes described by Plato and other sources.

The idea of Atlantis is also reflected in the ancient records of the Mayans. The Memorial de Sololá o Tecpán-Atitlán, a Cakchiquel manuscript, refers to Tulán as the homeland where their ancestors were born. Similarly, the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel describes the catastrophic destruction of the Mayan homeland:

During the Eleventh Ahau Katun, Ah Mucencab came forth and obscured the heavens. The Earth began to awaken. Suddenly, subterranean fires burst forth into the sky; fire rained down, ashes descended, and rocks and trees were thrown down. Wood and stone smashed together. The heavens were split asunder, thrown to and fro, and turned on their back.

This vivid account describes a world-shaking cataclysm, possibly caused by a tilt in the Earth's axis. The passage continues:

The orphans, the decrepit, and the widows were torn to pieces; their hearts failed them while they yet lived. Then they were buried in the sands and the sea. In one great rush of water, the Great Serpent was ravished from the heavens. The sky fell, and the Earth sank, as the four gods—the Bacabs—arose, bringing about the destruction of the world.

After this devastation, the Mayan records describe the reestablishment of order. The ancient texts symbolically portray four trees, each placed at one of the cardinal points and surmounted by a bird. The northern tree, a white tree, is said to have been erected as a symbol of the world's destruction, with other trees marking the west, south, and east. At the center stood the Great Mother Seiba, a memorial of the calamity. Brazilian scholar A.M. Bolio interprets this as a direct link to Atlantis, noting that the passage reflects the origin of Mayan culture in the death throes of their homeland.

The Mayan texts unequivocally describe their homeland as an oceanic landmass that sank beneath the sea. This aligns with Plato's description of Atlantis, which he claimed was destroyed in "a single day and night." Similarly, the Mayan account states that "in a moment, the great annihilation was finished."

Further evidence of this cataclysm is found in the Dresden Codex, the finest of three surviving Mayan hieroglyphic texts. Believed to be a copy of older documents, the codex contains 78 pages of hieroglyphs, less than half of which have been fully translated. Early scholars such as Forstemann, Bowditch, and Morley initially dismissed these codices as almanacs or ritual manuals. However, subsequent research by Eric Thompson and other scholars, such as Tatiana Proskouriakoff and Yuri Knorozov, has demonstrated that the codices contain historical content, including records of dynasties and cataclysms.

Significantly, the Dresden Codex concludes with an image of the god Itzamna as a monstrous celestial serpent pouring the waters of the Great Flood upon the Earth. This event signals the destruction of the Mayan homeland and echoes the tales of Atlantis. In 1869, Brasseur de Bourbourg attributed such cataclysmic content to Mayan codices, though his views were criticized by contemporary Mayanists. Modern breakthroughs, however, have vindicated his perspective, confirming that these texts contain profound historical and mythological significance (Stuart, 1975).

Taken together, these accounts—from Egyptian mythology to Mayan records—paint a vivid picture of a civilization destroyed by fire, water, and upheaval, consistent with the story of Atlantis. Thoth's legacy as a figure of immense knowledge and his ties to both Egypt and Atlantis serve as a reminder of the profound cultural and historical connections that stretch across continents and millennia.

The Dresden Codex includes historical content and concludes with an account of a watery cataclysm. Similarly, the Codex Tro-Cortesianus portrays the Mayan glyph for "land" or "motherland" being sacrificed by fire upon an altar. The four Bacabs, who are identified in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel as the agents of this cataclysm, are depicted at the four corners of the central motif. These details powerfully reinforce the connection to cataclysmic events central to Mayan and Atlantean narratives.

It is clear that the Classic Mayan civilization of Mesoamerica emerged too late to have descended directly from Atlantis. The earlier Olmec civilization is also too recent to establish a direct link with the fabled island empire. However, both Brasseur de Bourbourg (1868) and Lewis Spence (1924) proposed that Maya-like Atlanteans lived for thousands of years on Antillia, the island remnants of the Atlantean empire, before its final destruction. These



survivors, they suggested, migrated westward and eventually settled in the Yucatán Peninsula. This theory is supported by Mayan codices, which document multiple cataclysms that submerged portions of eastern America extending into the Atlantic.

Geological and underwater archaeological evidence corroborates these accounts. It indicates that large areas of the Gulf of Mexico were once above sea level and populated by ancient settlements, some possibly Mayan.

Dr. J. Manson Valentine's discoveries in Yucatán and Honduras provide further insights into a pre-Mayan culture. In numerous caves, he uncovered remnants of a megalithic civilization, including the ancient site of X-Kukican and the water-worn monolithic statues in Loltún Cavern (Valentine, 1969). Loltún, now 300 feet above the Yucatán plain, was submerged underwater for significant periods in antiquity. Not only are the cave's stalactites water-worn, but the massive carved statues within the cave also show signs of water erosion. One of these statues, lying on its back, features undeciphered inscriptions across its chest. The scene recalls the 70-foot monolith in an abandoned quarry on Easter Island, suggesting global connections to lost, ancient civilizations.

North of the Mayan territories were the Toltecs of Mexico, forerunners of the Aztecs who also spoke Nahuatl. Ixtlilxochitl, a chronicler of Toltec history, recounted a dramatic legend to the Spanish:

"It is found in the histories of the Toltecs that this age and first world, as they call it, lasted 1,716 years [approximately 11,691 BCE]. Men were destroyed by tremendous rains and lightning from the sky. Even the highest mountains were submerged. The Toltecs, a group of seven friends with their wives who spoke the same language, came to these parts after passing through great lands and seas..."

The Aztecs also preserved legends of cosmic destruction. They believed the sun had been destroyed four times before the creation of the present, fifth sun. This cosmology is famously depicted on the Aztec Calendar Stone. Hesiod's *Works and Days* and ancient Hindu texts similarly record five ages of humankind, underscoring parallels in global mythologies.

Brasseur de Bourbourg's translation of the Chimalpopoca Codex revealed an Aztec flood legend that may carry echoes of Atlantis:

"This is the sun called Fourth Water (Nahui-Atl). The water was calm for forty and twelve years, during which men lived for the third and fourth times. When the sun called Nahui-Atl came, two ages (1,240 years) plus four hundred and seventy-six years had passed. Then all mankind was lost and drowned, turning into fish or

appearing as drowned fish. The water rose to the sky, and in a single day all was lost. The day called Nahui-Xochitl destroyed all flesh.”

Brasseur interpreted “Nahui-Atl” as “Age of Water,” though it might more accurately be translated as “Fourth Waters,” referring to the fourth cataclysm. The Codex Vaticanus expands on this cycle of destruction, describing four ages of cataclysm: the first destroyed the world through water, the second through hurricanes, the third through fire, and the fourth through famine.

Returning to Mayan chronology, the Goodman-Martínez-Thompson correlation dates the start of the current Great Cycle to 3,114 BCE, with the preceding cycle beginning around 11,375 BCE. Spence (1924) speculated that the earlier date may mark the Mayan migration from Hispaniola to the American mainland. Ignatius Donnelly (1882) suggested that the abandonment of Mayan cities resulted from repeated catastrophic inundations. Over time, the necessity of fleeing these disasters became a deeply ingrained cultural practice, even after such events ceased.

Evidence suggests that the Mayans experienced a series of cataclysms beginning in the fifteenth century BCE, with lesser catastrophes occurring approximately every 52 years before subsiding entirely. Yet the Mayans continued to migrate and construct new temples dedicated to the gods of time and destruction, adhering to tradition without questioning its origins.

The interwoven accounts of the Mayans, Toltecs, and Aztecs, combined with archaeological evidence, support the idea that these civilizations retained fragmented memories of Atlantis. Their myths, legends, and histories reflect a world repeatedly shaped by destruction, survival, and renewal, echoing the enduring legacy of the lost continent.

## Final Thoughts

The narratives explored here—spanning ancient Egypt, Mesoamerica, and beyond—paint a compelling picture of a shared cultural memory of Atlantis. Thoth's role as a bringer of knowledge and civilization to Egypt, the Mayan codices' accounts of cataclysmic destruction, and the Aztec and Toltec myths of recurring worlds destroyed by water, fire, and famine suggest a deep interconnection in humanity's mythological and historical consciousness.

Archaeological discoveries provide tantalizing evidence of submerged civilizations and pre-Mayan cultures that could be remnants of an Atlantean diaspora. These findings, coupled with geological data and ancient texts, hint that the story of Atlantis may reflect real events—whether through direct historical transmission or as an archetype of the fragility of civilizations.

The concept of cyclic destruction, so central to the legends of Atlantis and echoed in the myths of the Mayans, Aztecs, and other cultures, may be rooted in humanity's collective memory of a significant global catastrophe. These stories endure because they remind us of the transience of human achievement and the resilience required to rebuild.

Atlantis is imprinted in the myths, traditions, and achievements of ancient cultures. The story of Atlantis serves as both a cautionary tale and a testament to human ingenuity, bridging the ancient past with enduring questions about our shared history and future.